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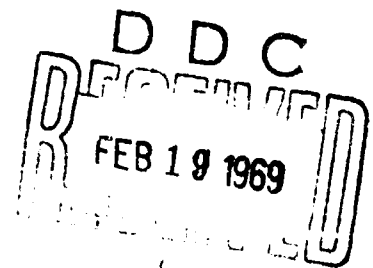
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An Experimental Criterion of
Cross-Cultural Interaction Effectiveness:
A Study of Military Advisors and Counterparts

by

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Prefatory Note

This paper is based on research performed by the Human Resources Research Office, Division No. 7, (Language and Area Training), Alexandria, Virginia, under Work Unit MAP II, Effectiveness Factors in the Performance of Military Advisors.

A major portion of the research was facilitated by support provided by the Army Research Unit, Korea. The observations reported in this paper were collected in 1966 from U.S. Army personnel assigned to the Korean Military Advisory Group and their counterparts in the Republic of Korea Army. A more complete description of the work summarized in this paper is in preparation.

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The contents of this paper are not to be construed as an official Department of the Army position, unless so designated by other authorized documents.

AN EXPERIMENTAL CRITERION OF
CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION EFFECTIVENESS:
A STUDY OF MILITARY ADVISORS AND COUNTERPARTS

Dean K. Froehlich

Military Requirements

Fulfillment of the Army's responsibilities for the Military Assistance Program (MAP) entails the formulation of policies and procedures concerned with the selection and training of prospective advisor personnel. Choices are made, in part, on the basis of the consequences they are presumed to have on the performance of these personnel. Yet, unlike most other areas of military personnel management policy, few empirically verified procedures exist with which to identify or assess the kinds of proficiencies that may be relatively specific to the advisor type of role. In the absence of an acceptable definition of what constitutes effective advisor performance and a means for assessing it, it is not possible to gauge the success of the choices that have been made, or evaluate changes that might be made with respect to these policies and procedures.

Some of these problems can be illustrated by reference to an Army regulation. Section III of Army Regulation 600-200 is, for example, implicitly concerned with the definition and evaluation of the performance of advisory personnel, as well as with procedures for assuring the attainment of those criteria. The difficulties that can be anticipated in attempts to implement the guidance contained in the regulation illustrate the necessity for research in this area of personnel management. The regulation states, "It is imperative that personnel be selected who, in their contact with foreign nationals and other services, will reflect highest credit upon the United States and the military service." The regulation further implies that the attainment of these objectives can be accomplished by means of selecting personnel who, ". . . have demonstrated to a marked degree . . . (a) . . . pleasing personality, potential ability to meet, understand, and work with foreign nationals."

The regulation draws attention to a significant and ever-growing aspect of the role of the military in American international relations at the face-to-face level. The successful attainment of the objectives implied in the regulation can be achieved only if supported by systematic research oriented toward the development of appropriate concepts and techniques for identifying and assessing successes, failures, and their causes.

Researchable Requirements

Translation of this regulation into a feasible course of action requires solutions and answers to certain questions. If it is one of

the objectives of the Military Assistance Program to have advisors reflect "highest credit" upon the United States and the military service, then how can we best define what "credit" is? How can we define it so that it is possible to identify, observe, measure, and record events that reflect variations in it? If having a "pleasing personality" and the ability to work with foreign nationals are critical to the attainment of this objective, then we must find ways of measuring these characteristics. Otherwise, the presumed relationship must be given the logical status of a preconception rather than that of an empirically verified conception.

More specifically, translation of this regulation into a useful procedure for improving the effectiveness of advisors requires identification of those behaviors which counterparts regard as "pleasing" or conducive to a cooperative work relation. Can it be safely assumed, as the regulation would seem to imply, that there exists a universally shared definition of what constitutes a pleasing personality? Further, is there any evidence to support the validity of the belief that the nominations of American commanding officers will net for assignment as advisors those individuals whose personalities will be regarded as pleasing by groups as diverse as the Chinese, Turkish, and Ethiopian counterparts? Finally, is it reasonable to assume that the personality characteristics of the individual advisors are the major factors that determine whether or not the "highest credit" is reflected on the United States? May not differences between the national policies of the United States and the host country play some part? May not the military duties of the advisor have some effect? May not differences between the advisor and the counterpart with respect to what each regards as legitimate functions influence the extent to which this goal is achieved?

An Approach to the Assessment of Effectiveness

In order to seek answers to these and a host of other questions that have become prominent because of the large numbers of U.S. military personnel who are now representing this country overseas, the Army Research Office supported a study of advisor-counterpart relationships. Some of what has been learned from that study is relevant to problems associated with the selection, training, and assessment of military advisors. While the analyses of the data are incomplete, and the conclusions tentative, some of the results can be meaningfully reported at this time.

One of the major research efforts undertaken was the experimental development of a conceptual definition of what constituted "effective" advisor-counterpart interactions and a means with which to assess them. The specifications for the criterion were fourfold:

First, it was desirable that the criterion should define some aspect of advisor-counterpart interactions that was *relevant* to the broad objectives of the Military Assistance Program.

Second, it was also desirable that the criterion be of such a nature that it could be applied *equitably* to samples of advisors and

counterparts who were representative of the entire population. We chose to exclude from consideration several potential criteria on the grounds that they could be applied equitably only to selected sub-samples of advisors and counterparts.

Third, it was highly desirable that the criterion assess a *product* or *outcome* of the interactions that occurred between advisors and counterparts.

Finally, we sought a criterion that has promise of *yielding new insights* into the individual, as well as situational factors that had an influence on the effectiveness with which advisors and counterparts interacted.

In short, we sought to develop a research tool with which to identify and assess conditions that influenced the product of advisor-counterpart interactions, rather than the development of an assessment technique designed to permit the more familiar kinds of officer evaluations to be made.

These specifications, as well as observations made during the course of an earlier exploratory study, led us to define the effectiveness of advisor-counterpart interactions in terms of whether the interactions did or did not result in willingness or unwillingness to continue working together. This definition can be equitably applied to all or most advisors since it is part of the mission of advisors to develop in their counterparts an openness and receptiveness not only to the recommendations that they may make, but to those of their successors. Although advisors may differ in all other respects, they share this fundamental objective. Moreover, counterparts who seek to avoid or terminate interactions with advisors are not likely to fulfill their roles in the implementation of the MAP. In addition, this definition does assess an important product or outcome from the interactions that occur between advisors and counterparts. The definition has high relevance to one of the broadest objectives of the MAP. Finally, this conception of effectiveness does hold forth the promise of enabling one to discover the variations between both individual and situational factors that either promote or impede the development of effective interactions.

The estimates of willingness to continue to work together were obtained by means of responses of advisors and counterparts to items in a checklist. The items described hypothetical, but plausible, situations and required the respondent to indicate a choice. The choices were defined by descriptions of behavior that were of a sort that would typically lead to a continuation or a discontinuation of interaction. Advisors completed the checklist on the basis of their judgments concerning particular counterparts with whom they were working at that time, while counterparts responded to items with respect to the particular advisors who had rated them.

Validity Estimates

Part of the development of any new assessment technique must focus on efforts to estimate its validity. If it is claimed that a new device is a barometer, then it is incumbent upon the inventor to

adduce evidence that demonstrates a reliable relationship between changes in barometric pressure and the values that are registered on the instrument. If a technique claims to assess the willingness of advisors and counterparts to continue working together, then evidence needs to be presented to demonstrate reliable relations between the values obtained by the assessment technique and variations in other conditions that can be expected to influence the willingness.

Three categories of conditions of this type were identified and data collected from each one:

First, information descriptive of the personal traits of co-workers with whom advisors and counterparts did and did not prefer to work was collected. In addition to permitting empirical tests of the relationship between willingness to continue working together and the personal traits of the co-workers, the data enable a determination to be made of the extent to which Americans and counterparts have similar or different kinds of preferences.

Second, if the criterion of effectiveness that has been developed is a valid one, in the sense that it does reflect variations that occur with respect to interactions that have taken place between advisors and counterparts, then estimates of the willingness of advisors and counterparts to work together ought to be related to relatively specific behaviors that have occurred during the course of those interactions.

Lastly, if the willingness of advisors and counterparts to work together is a function not only of their personal traits and specific behaviors, but also of the kinds of duties that they undertake to perform, then differences between them with respect to these activities should be reflected in our estimates of their willingness to continue working together.

A number of tests have been carried out within each of these three categories of information to determine whether they are related to the criterion. The collective pattern of relationships that emerged from these analyses does indicate that our attempt to assess the willingness of advisors and counterparts to continue working together has achieved some degree of success. This conclusion is based upon an extensive number of tests; only a few of the major ones will be reported here.

(1) Relation of the criterion of co-worker preference ratings. Advisors and counterparts who were, at the time of the study, interacting with each other were asked to indicate the extent to which their respective co-worker displayed the presence of 40 traits. The judgments obtained from the two groups were separately analyzed to yield basic clusters of items and the scores that they had assigned to one another on the criterion related to these trait clusters. The judgments of both advisors and counterparts resulted in the identification of two major dimensions along which they had described each other.

The first dimension is defined by personal traits that describe various aspects of a co-worker's competence. Although the

American and counterpart competence factors do differ from each other with respect to subtle shades of meaning (differences that make sense when related to the different types of roles they play), the scores that advisors and counterparts gave to one another on the criterion are clearly related to these factors. The more competent the counterpart considers his advisor to be, the more likely it is that he will express some degree of willingness to continue working with him. The same relationship exists with respect to advisors' appraisals of counterparts.

The second basic dimension obtained from the analyses of co-worker traits clearly describes what might be labeled a "social harmony" or "congenial manners" factor. Again, while subtle differences occur between the precise meaning that Americans and counterparts give to it, the fundamental meaning is very similar. Judged in terms of the criterion scores that counterparts gave to their advisors, the willingness of counterparts to continue working with an advisor is related to their impressions of his abilities to interact harmoniously with them. This relationship is not found among advisors' judgments. While advisors do describe counterparts in terms of a social harmony factor, their willingness to continue working with them appears unrelated to this factor. The explanation of these results is that American advisors, generally, express very little dissatisfaction with respect to how their counterparts relate to them socially; they feel that counterparts are, on the whole, sufficiently modest, respectful, pleasant, humble, patient, polite, kind, and so forth. Consequently, there is very little variation within the judgments of advisors concerning these characteristics of counterparts. The differences that do occur are too small and unsystematic for the criterion to detect. Just as a crude barometer cannot detect and register infinitesimal variations in barometric pressure, so our criterion of effectiveness is insensitive to minor variations. Advisors do, however, report seeing significant differences between counterparts with respect to their level of competence. Some are regarded as clearly more industrious, productive, competent, organized, learned, and so forth, than others. The criterion instrument is sensitive to these larger differences, and does register variation with respect to them. While this explication of some of the properties of the criterion instrument is of interest in itself, what is of greater relevance is the demonstration of a relationship between the willingness of counterparts to continue working with advisors and whether they perceive the advisor as a man who is friendly, consistent, not disagreeable, but forgiving, and considerate.

(2) Relation of the criterion to "critical behaviors." A second approach to estimating the validity of the criterion technique was made by trying to determine what relations, if any, existed between the criterion scores that advisors and counterparts gave to each other and their descriptions of one another with respect to an inventory of statements descriptive of "critical behaviors." If the criterion technique that has been constructed is yielding valid assessments, then it ought to be capable of detecting and registering differences between behaviors that are, or are not, regarded as highly commendable. Advisors described

their counterparts in terms of the frequency with which they displayed 64 types of behaviors, and counterparts described their advisors in terms of 134 critical behaviors. Each judge described both the frequency with which the behavior occurred and the extent to which the frequency was desirable. By combining the two judgments and dealing with their relationship, it is possible to derive summary scores that may be interpreted as indices of the degrees to which advisors and counterparts are satisfied with the ways in which they are playing their respective roles.

The three indices are based on the percentage of items to which the respondents indicated that their co-worker should show certain behaviors more often, less often, or about as often as they had been doing. All of the relationships that were obtained between these scores and those obtained from the criterion support in interpretation of the criterion scores as expressions of willingness to continue working together. The more times a counterpart indicates that an advisor should do something more often or less often, the lower is the criterion score that he assigns to his advisor. The same relationship exists between the judgments of advisors concerning the critical behaviors of their counterparts. The more often counterparts indicate that they feel no changes in the behaviors of their advisor are desirable, the higher is the criterion score that they assign to that advisor. The same relationship exists with respect to advisors' judgments of counterparts.

What is the nature of these critical behaviors that have been shown to relate to the criterion? First, there are important differences between the kinds of behaviors that advisors regard as critical determinants of their impressions of counterparts, and those that counterparts regard as critical determinants of their impressions of advisors. Given the known differences between the political and economic backgrounds of the two groups and the corresponding differences between the roles that they play, the observed differences between what they regard as important behaviors are hardly surprising. What is surprising and significant is the fact that they have been demonstrated to be systematically related to the estimates of their willingness to continue working together.

Over 50% of the counterparts indicated that their advisors should *less often* oppose or non-concur with recommendations that their Army made to the American advisory group; *less often* appear ignorant of differences between what is SOP in their Army and in the U.S. Army; *less often* leave the impression that they believe what other Americans say more than what their counterparts say. It seems clear that advisors generally engage in very few behaviors that counterparts generally regard as undesirable. Basically, these behaviors appear to be those that suggest, whether correctly or not, that the Military Assistance Group exercises too much control over final decisions concerning the counterparts' use of the Military Assistance Program; behaviors that suggest, whether erroneously or not, that the advisor either has failed to discriminate differences between what is customary in the two military organizations or, having done so, persists in expecting

counterparts to adopt the American way; and behaviors which imply, accurately or not, that information derived from counterpart sources is less trustworthy than that originating from American sources.

The commendable behaviors that counterparts appear to want advisors to manifest more often are variations on a limited number of themes. A dominant and recurrent theme is the receipt of support from the advisor. Counterparts want their advisors to *more often* take actions to procure materials, supplies, and equipment for them. They want the advisor to *more often* advocate their requests and recommendations in Military Assistance Advisory Group staffings. They want their advisors to *more often* support them in satisfying the requirements that their superiors have levied on them. Nearly two-thirds of the counterparts want their advisors to *more often* keep them informed on the status of requests, plans, work in progress, and so forth. Finally, counterparts want their advisors to *more often* display an interest in becoming knowledgeable about their country's language, history, economy, customs, and the feelings of their people.

Advisors' judgments with respect to the critical behaviors of their counterparts suggest a generally high level of satisfaction with them. There appear to be only three exceptions. Forty percent or more of the advisors expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which their counterparts had kept them informed; in particular, advisors are dissatisfied with the information, or lack of it, that is contained in briefings that counterparts give to them. Second, nearly two-thirds of the advisors agree that their counterparts permit their subordinates to turn out work that is unnecessarily below standard or contains errors. Finally, somewhat less than half of the advisors regard their counterparts as failing to use ordinary logic in planning a course of action. These are the only behaviors advisors reported as sufficiently objectionable that they should occur less often.

The counterpart behaviors that advisors wish to occur more often generally are mirror-images of those they want to occur less often. For example, advisors report that they want their counterparts to *more often* volunteer information to them so that they will be better able to understand a situation that is of concern to them. They also want their counterparts to *more often* make careful inspections of the performance of subordinates in order to ensure the establishment and maintenance of high standards. Related to advisors' concern with standards are the reports that they wish counterparts to *more often* actively cooperate in implementing recommendations designed to tighten control over funds and/or materials supplied by the Military Assistance Program. Finally, advisors would like their counterparts to *more often* strive to accomplish their missions with less reliance on physical resources and more on the development and application of ingenious methods.

These, then, are the principal types of behaviors that result in either satisfactory or frustrating advisor-counterpart interactions. These are the kinds of behaviors that appear to make a difference to advisors and counterparts in the sense that they may influence the willingness to continue working together.

(3) Relation of the criterion to the advisor's "primary concerns." Four major bases for association between advisors and counterparts were identified. The categories are defined in terms of whether the advisor is typically concerned with (a) monitoring the counterpart's use of the Military Assistance Program, (b) developing plans and policies, (c) providing technical know-how, or (d) procuring materials, equipment, supplies, and funds. Classification of criterion scores that counterparts gave to advisors into these four categories yields significant differences. Counterparts who view their advisors as being primarily concerned with monitoring express significantly less willingness to continue working with them than all other groups of counterparts. Attempts to improve the effectiveness of advisors might well begin with a closer examination of how the responsibilities for monitoring are being carried out.

Recapitulation

The work conducted thus far in searching for a criterion of advisory effectiveness began with the assumption that willingness to continue working together was the most important single ingredient of effective interactions. A technique for assessing the willingness of advisors and counterparts to continue working together was developed. The resulting measures have been found to be related to (a) co-worker characteristics, both general and specific, (b) specific behaviors of the people involved in these relations, and (c) counterparts' perceptions of their advisors' primary concerns. The relationships that have been examined support the assumption with which the work began. Thus, willingness to continue to work together is a measurable aspect of advisor-counterpart relations which deserves consideration as a key criterion of effectiveness.

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